# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>By The Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Keynote Speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Committee Summary Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic Development, Transportation &amp; Cultural Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Services &amp; Public Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture &amp; Rural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Energy &amp; Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fiscal Affairs &amp; Government Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Committee Elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Executive Committee Summary Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Site Visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Campaign Against Hunger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>International Relations Forum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Policy Plenary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>State Transformation in Action Recognition (STAR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Conference Awards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>2021 - 2022 SLC Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Host State Committee and SLC Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BY THE NUMBERS

TOTAL ATTENDEES & VOLUNTEERS
1,494

ECONOMIC IMPACT
$2.2 million

SESSIONS
18

MEALS PACKAGED AT CAMPAIGN AGAINST HUNGER
63,000

Source: Nashville Convention and Visitors Bureau
Keynote Speakers

Bill Haslam
49th Governor of Tennessee
Author of Faithful Presence

Maneet Chauhan
Chef, Restauranter, Author, and Television Personality

Colonel Littleton
Designer and Proprietor
The Great American Leather Company
According to the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), the national 10-year infrastructure investment gap is nearly $2.6 trillion, up from $2.1 trillion in 2017. Janey Camp, from Vanderbilt University, provided an overview of ASCE’s 2021 Infrastructure Report Card to highlight successes and challenges related to states’ infrastructure systems. Joung Lee of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials spoke about the potential implications for states if a federal infrastructure package is passed this year.

Workshare programs allow businesses to temporarily reduce employees’ hours, rather than resorting to layoffs, during economic downturns. Designed to reduce overall unemployment, worksharing has the potential to benefit businesses and workers, while also supporting state unemployment coffers by reducing the total amount paid toward unemployment claims. Keerthi Sugumaran, from the JacksonLewis law firm, spoke about ways states can take advantage of these programs, along with challenges that are frequently encountered.

Over the last 60 years, the number of jobs requiring an occupational license has grown from about one in 20 to nearly one in four. When implemented correctly, occupational licensing protects consumers' health and safety by requiring practitioners to undergo training and enforces oversight in cases where harm occurs. However, differences in occupational licensing laws across states create barriers for those looking to enter the market. Senator Barrow Peacock from Louisiana, Michele Feldman with The Council of State Governments Justice Center, and Amy Firehouse with the South Carolina Technical College System participated in a panel discussion on ways in which occupational licensure regulations are being reformed in the South.
SUMMARY REPORT

JUVENILE COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES

A growing number of states have limited restrictions related to education and employment for people with criminal records. However, few have devoted the same attention to how these “collateral consequences” impact people with juvenile records. Jacob Agus-Kleinman from The Council of State Governments Justice Center presented on best practices related to juvenile collateral consequences, and what steps states can take to ensure they are implementing the most effective policies, while Senator Wes Climer from South Carolina spoke specifically about his state’s efforts in this area.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION

Human trafficking and exploitation are prevalent throughout the United States, part of a global industry involving billions of dollars and millions of victims. Due to underreporting and the difficulty of identifying victims, there is no official estimate of the number of people trafficked nationally. However, tens of thousands of cases have been reported involving both U.S. citizens and foreign nationals. Kathryn Moorehead from the Office of the Attorney General in South Carolina discussed the prevalence of trafficking and how her state is combating it.

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ALZHEIMER’S AND RELATED DEMENTIAS

In 2020, the direct costs of caring for individuals with these diseases amounted to approximately $305 billion nationally – with Medicare and Medicaid covering two-thirds of the total – in addition to billions of dollars in economic value provided by unpaid caregivers. Jennifer Rosen, of the Alzheimer’s Association, and Representative John LaHood from Georgia spoke about the impact of Alzheimer’s and related dementias and highlighted successful pieces of related legislation that states can emulate.

VIEW ALL COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS ONLINE HERE
BROADBAND INTERNET: ACCESS AND CHALLENGES IN RURAL AMERICA

Approximately one-fifth of Americans live in rural areas. According to the Federal Communications Commission, 80 percent of the 24 million American households without reliable, affordable high-speed internet are in rural areas. An expert panel discussed the obstacles to obtaining reliable broadband internet in rural areas and how to overcome them. Senator Steve Gooch of Georgia and Delegate Daniel Linville of West Virginia discussed measures taken in their respective states to expand broadband access.

COVID-19 AND AGRICULTURE: PANDEMIC RESPONSE AND AGRICULTURE FORECAST

Like all sectors of the American economy, the agriculture sector was impacted by COVID-19. Farmers and ranchers had to adjust their processes during the pandemic to continue to operate safely. Michael Nepveux of the American Farm Bureau Federation reviewed the agriculture sector’s response to the pandemic and previewed the forecast for American farmers.

RURAL HOSPITAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19

With decreasing rural populations, geographic isolation, and changing federal regulations, many rural hospitals have struggled to maintain financial viability in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted this issue, as many rural Americans had to travel long distances to be tested or receive a vaccine. Keith Mueller, Ph.D., of the Center for Rural Health Policy Analysis, and Mark Holmes, Ph.D., of the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research, addressed the state of rural hospitals in the South and their response to COVID-19.
NEW FEDERAL ENERGY CHANGES

The start of a new presidential administration brings new priorities, agency heads, and rule changes. Michael Nasi, energy and environmental attorney with Jackson Walker, examined executive orders and proposed policies from the Biden administration and dispelled common energy misconceptions. He also discussed Winter Storm Uri, the accompanying blackouts in Texas, and the state's legislative response.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE ENERGY SECTOR

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted temporary stay-at-home orders and a move to working and learning from home. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, energy use decreased considerably in 2020, and it will likely take years to return to pre-COVID levels. Susan Grissom of American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers remotely presented on how COVID-19 affected the energy sector and the post-COVID outlook for Southern states.

ENSURING THE SECURITY AND RESILIENCY OF AMERICA’S ENERGY GRID

In recent years, the security and resiliency of America's energy grid have come under increased scrutiny due to cyber security threats, terrorism, and natural disasters. The 2020 Solar Winds cyberattack and power outages caused by winter storms and other weather events have highlighted the importance of this issue. Jeff Lyash, president and CEO of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), discussed the history of the TVA and how it has worked to prevent physical and digital threats. Scott Aaronson, vice president of security and preparedness of the Edison Electric Institute, detailed how states and energy providers can safeguard against these events.
COVID-19 AND SCHOOL GOVERNANCE: LESSONS FOR STATE AND LOCAL POLICYMAKERS

For the 2020-2021 school year, public school enrollment fell by three percent – the most significant decrease since the start of this century. Additionally, existing inequities led to a growth in the "homework gap" as the digital divide grew among impacted communities – with 65 percent of parents surveyed by the National School Boards Association (NSBA) saying internet connectivity was a problem for their children. Abby Potts of the National Association of State Boards of Education and Chip Slaven of the NSBA discussed measures undertaken at the state and local level to blunt the pandemic's impact on education governance via federal relief funds and state initiatives.

STATE STRATEGIES TO CORRECT THE "COVID SLIDE"

According to data gathering via national testing conducted by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) in Fall 2020, students experienced concerning declines in math learning and no gain in reading. However, educational experts – Dr. Beth Tarasawa of the NWEA and Dr. Nate Schwartz of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University – clarified that national testing did not accurately measure COVID impacts on rural and underserved communities. These presenters suggested intensive summer learning programs, more investment in online educational support, and community learning pods as possible strategies for policymakers to address the "COVID Slide."

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS EDUCATION STAFFING SHORTAGES

Over the past decade, the number of students studying to become educators has plummeted. The United States Department of Education reports that 42 states faced a shortage of specialized teachers for the 2020-2021 academic year. This impact is especially felt in rural communities and lower-income areas. Dr. Jared Bigham with the National Rural Education Association championed grow-your-own initiatives to solve the rural staffing need. Dr. Barnett Berry of the University of South Carolina College of Education emphasized the importance of investing in teacher leaders to encourage and retain staff. Both experts agreed that the unprecedented level of federal funding being sent to states provides a unique opportunity for rethinking education staffing, recruitment, and training.

VIEW ALL COMMITTEE PRESENTATIONS ONLINE HERE
Despite dire projections, most states in the region have experienced a substantial recovery from the pandemic’s acute initial impact on revenues and the economy. However, states dependent on tourism-related revenues are still susceptible to COVID-related disruptions. Laurel Graefe of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta noted that overall employment remains below pre-pandemic levels, despite recent surges. The National Association of State Budget Officers' director, Shelby Kerns, presented that 38 states exceed projected revenue collections in fiscal year 2021 leading to a widespread expectation of modest gains for fiscal 2022.

PUBLIC PENSIONS: RESILIENCY AND REFORMS

In Summer 2020, the 50-state pension funding gap rose to an unprecedented $1.4 trillion. As the leader of one of the Southern region's most well-regarded public retirement systems, Tennessee State Treasurer David Lillard explained how members could learn from Tennessee's success in turning around their ailing public pension system over the past decade. Greg Mennis of The Pew Charitable Trusts noted successful reforms in Nebraska, Utah, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Wisconsin as models for states looking to ensure the stability of their systems. Highlighted reforms from both experts included shifting new hires to a hybrid model and requiring risk assessment and stress testing reporting.

COMPARATIVE DATA REPORTS (ADULT CORRECTIONS; ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION; AND TRANSPORTATION)

Continuing the annual tradition, legislative staff from the region highlighted selected figures from the comparative data reports that track many revenue sources and performance measures. In the Elementary and Secondary Education presentation, Hank Hager – counsel for the West Virginia Senate Education Committee - highlighted results from the region's 2019 National Assessment of Education Progress scores. Rebecca Robinson of the Louisiana Legislative Fiscal Office reported on the state of Adult Corrections funding and staffing across the region. Finally, Justin Perry with the Kentucky Legislative Research Commission spoke on transportation infrastructure and funding in the South using data from the Transportation Report.
COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORTATION & CULTURAL AFFAIRS

Representative Nathaniel Ledbetter of Alabama was elected chair of the Economic Development, Transportation & Cultural Affairs Committee for the 2021-2022 term. Senator Becky Duncan Massey of Tennessee was elected vice chair of the committee.

HUMAN SERVICES & PUBLIC SAFETY

Representative Fredrick J. Love of Arkansas was elected chair of the Human Services & Public Safety Committee for the 2021-2022 term. Representative Mandi Ballinger of Georgia was elected vice chair of the committee.

AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Senator Casey Murdock of Oklahoma was re-elected as chair of the Agriculture & Rural Development Committee for the 2021-2022 term. Senator Tyler Harper of Georgia was re-elected as vice chair of the committee.

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Representative Jim Gooch, Jr. of Kentucky was re-elected as chair of the Energy & Environment Committee for the 2021-2022 term. Senator Ken Yager of Tennessee was re-elected as vice chair of the committee.

EDUCATION

Senator Greg Hembree of South Carolina was elected as chair of the Education Committee for the 2021-2022 term. Senator Hembree served as vice chair and acting chair of the committee for the prior term. Representative Rhonda Baker of Oklahoma was elected as vice chair of the committee.

FISCAL AFFAIRS & GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Representative John Read of Mississippi was re-elected as chair of the Fiscal Affairs & Government Operations Committee for the 2021-2022 term. Senator Kerry Roberts of Tennessee was re-elected as vice chair of the committee.
RULES MODIFICATION

The cancellation of the 74th Annual Meeting was the second consecutive cancellation of an SLC Annual Meeting necessitated by unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances. Therefore, the Executive Committee permanently codified amendments to the rules that will allow for smooth transitions of leadership and the continuation of future conference business if cancellations or remote meetings are required. See the newly revised SLC Rules here.

POLICY REGARDING THE NON-PAYMENT OF STATE DUES

In July 2020, an electronic survey was sent to the Executive Committee soliciting feedback on the imposition of sanctions on SLC member states that have not paid their membership dues to The Council of State Governments (CSG) for three or more years.

Of those that elected to participate in the initial question, the polling resulted in 57.3 percent in favor of imposing sanctions on SLC member states that have not paid their dues. Of a possible 75 votes, 43 individuals voted aye, 2 voted nay, and 30 abstained. Therefore, this became a voting action for the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee approved the recommendation and amended section “V. Executive Committee, Section 2 – Responsibilities” of the Rules of the SLC to include the language “It shall encourage and implement strategies to keep member states annual dues current.” Additionally, the Executive Committee adopted an internal policy for mandatory and discretionary sanctions.

POLICY POSITION FROM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORTATION, AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee approved for the Southern Legislative Conference to support the policy statement regarding “The Establishment of a Nationally Licensed Off-Highway Vehicle Trails Resolution” presented by West Virginia Speaker Pro Tempore Gary Howell.

VIEW MEMORANDUMS ONLINE HERE
SUPREME COURT UPDATE

As the Supreme Court tackles its current term, many new cases of interest to states and local governments have been added, including the Affordable Care Act (ACA), foster care, voting, college athlete pay, and more. Presented by Lisa Soronen of the State and Local Legal Center, this session assessed the implications of those cases for state governments and previewed what the rest of the 2021-2022 Supreme Court term may hold.

COVID 19: A NEW OPERATING MODEL FOR STATE GOVERNMENT

COVID-19 has affected operating models across all sectors. This session, presented by Anastasia Campbell, J.D, Director of the Office of Legal Services for the Tennessee General Assembly, discussed the timeline of events and changes needed to continue the department's operations for the Office of Legal Services. Anastasia focused on the need for rapid change in a condensed amount of time, the steps taken, and how creative technological solutions enabled the office to go from paper-based and in-person to a successful remote work operation.

STATE GOVERNMENT TALENT MANAGEMENT

Using Missouri’s talent management practices as a case study, Casey Osterkamp, Director of Division Personnel for Missouri’s Office of Administration, discussed the increased need for enhanced talent management practices in state government. This session focused on the department’s approach to greater recruitment and retention for state government employees using Engage 2.0, a new platform for enhanced feedback and supervisor relationships to use cross-departmentally.

DATA PROTECTION AND CYBERSECURITY

In 2020, nearly 2,400 U.S.-based governments, healthcare facilities, and schools were victims of ransomware. As cyber-attacks ramp up across the country, the need for enhanced cybersecurity measures is dire. Mark Weatherford, Chief Strategy Officer of the National Cybersecurity Center, discussed the cybersecurity landscape and increased measures state governments can take to prevent future cyber-attacks.

VIEW ALL WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS ONLINE HERE
LIPMAN BROTHERS

Established in 1939, Lipman Brothers was the first distributor of wine and spirits in Tennessee. With an extensive wholesale portfolio of wine, spirits, beer, bottled water, mixers, Riedel crystal, and cigars, Lipman Brothers has proven leadership in the marketplace for more than 80 years. The company delivers wine, spirits, and beer to 74 of the 96 Tennessee counties, representing over 77% of the state’s population. Members participated in a guided tour of Lipman Brothers new warehouse, followed by an on-site beverage tasting.

ARRINGTON VINEYARDS

Committee members traveled to Arrington Vineyards, 30 miles south of Nashville, to learn about agritourism and its importance to Tennessee. Owned by country music legend Kix Brooks, master vintner Kip Summers, and Nashville businessman John Russell, the beautiful 95-acre property includes 16 acres of vineyards. Kix Brooks and Kip Summers met with participants to discuss the history of the vineyards.

TENNESSEE COLLEGE OF APPLIED TECHNOLOGY (TCAT) AND NISSAN TRAINING CENTER

Committee members toured the TCAT campus, 30 minutes outside of Nashville, to learn about this innovative public-private partnership – with Nissan and more than 20 other private sector partners – to increase workforce development in central Tennessee. This state-of-the-art facility opened in 2017, allows students – and Nissan employees – to work together and gain hands-on experience in machining, welding, and other applied technologies essential to growing the skilled workforce in the state. Tennessee House Education Committee Chairman Mark White, Nissan’s Matt Breedlove, and Dr. Carol Puryear, President of TCAT-Murfreesboro, met with participants to discuss the genesis of this partnership and how it is a successful vocational and technical education model.
CAMPAIGN AGAINST HUNGER

To aid food-insecure families in Tennessee, the SLC held its annual Campaign Against Hunger. During this year’s Campaign Against Hunger, Annual Meeting participants brought the number of donated meals to half a million, packaging 63,000 meals in pantry packs for food-insecure families in the Nashville area.

The packaged meals and a charitable contribution of $1,500 were donated to Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee.

The SLC partners with the Outreach Program, an Iowa-based nonprofit with an enduring mission of providing food, water, medical care and education to millions of children in the United States and in East Africa, to sponsor this event. The SLC also presented Outreach Program with a donation of $1,500.

“AS HOSTS OF THIS YEAR’S SLC ANNUAL MEETING, WE ARE GLAD TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS EVENT AND GIVE BACK TO THE NASHVILLE AND TENNESSEE COMMUNITY.”

- Speaker Cameron Sexton
At this year’s first annual International Relations Forum, participants heard from an international roundtable discussion by Ard van der Vorst - Consul General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Atlanta & Local Chair EU Presidency, Jag Badwal - Agent-General, Government of Ontario, and Louise Blais - Ambassador, Consulate General of Canada.

Moderated by Masami Izumida Tyson, Global Director of Foreign Direct Investment and Trade at the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, the forum focused on the importance and benefits of international relationships in the Southern region for trade, investments, economic development, and tourism.

This inaugural program underscores SLC’s commitment to facilitating future international discussions with state leaders.
As the conference’s premier policy event, the Policy Plenary featured a public-private sector panel that discussed the implications of the pandemic on work, the gigification of the economy, and the future of the workforce.

Moderated by Tennessee Lieutenant Governor Randy McNally, attendees heard from legislative leaders in North Carolina and West Virginia - Representative Jason Saine and Senate President Craig Blair - regarding recent legislative proposals to address these matters in their respective states. Dr. Shelly Steward of the Aspen Institute's Future of Work Initiative's provided an expert perspective on the national discussion and research surrounding the changing scope of work. The private sector, represented by Liz Jarvis-Shean from DoorDash and Casey Aden-Wansbury from Instacart, shared industry perspectives on these emerging policy issues.
Virginia’s Military Medics and Corpsmen program offers clinical, leadership, and non-clinical career pathways to veterans and military spouses seeking healthcare careers within the commonwealth. When they transition to the civilian workforce, veterans may struggle to translate their military healthcare experience and into civilian healthcare employment. Many are unemployed, underemployed or not working in the healthcare field. The Military Medics and Corpsmen program addresses this challenge by recruiting, reviewing, and referring candidates to healthcare employers statewide. By facilitating hiring MMAC reduces healthcare staffing shortages and supports quality patient care.

Virginia Housing Reform for Inmates with Serious Mental Illnesses, Virginia Department of Corrections

Lois Fegan, Chief of Restrictive Housing
Melvin Davis, Warden, Wallens Ridge State Prison

The Virginia Department of Corrections’ Secure Diversionary Treatment Program addresses a critical need to safely manage the increasing population of inmates with a Serious Mental Illness (SMI) in the criminal justice system. The program was developed to divert inmates with an SMI who are at risk of engaging in disruptive and serious incidents from a restrictive housing setting into a program where their unique needs are met and supported. By diverting these inmates into a treatment-focused environment, dedicated staff can provide opportunities for participants to manage their mental illness, improve pro-social metrics, and eventually thrive in the general population or in the community upon release.
CONFERENCE AWARDS

THOMAS B. MURPHY LONGEVITY OF SERVICE AWARD AND CARTER/HELLARD LEGISLATIVE STAFF AWARD

SENATOR EMMETT HANGER
VIRGINIA

The Thomas B. Murphy Longevity of Service Award is presented to a Southern state legislator who has distinguished themselves by dutifully serving their constituents during their years in the legislature and who have been active participants in the Southern Legislative Conference.

This year's recipient, Senator Emmett Hanger of Virginia, served in the House of Delegates from 1983 - 1992 and in the Senate from 1996 to the present. Senator Hanger has been a longstanding SLC committee member and has served as chair of the Human Services & Public Safety Committee in 2013 and 2014.

TERESA ARNOLD
KENTUCKY

Presented annually, the Carter/Hellard Legislative Staff Award is given to a staff member who has demonstrated excellence and dedication in service to state legislators in the South. Ms. Teresa Arnold, Deputy Director for Research and Communications for the Kentucky Legislative Research Commission, was selected by the Legislative Directors Group as the 2021 recipient.

Teresa was nominated by Jay Hartz, Director of the Kentucky Legislative Research Commission.

"IN HER 18 YEARS WITH LRC, TERESA’S DEDICATION TO SERVICE AND EXCEPTIONAL SKILLS HAVE ALLOWED HER TO SUCCESSFULLY TAKE ON WIDE A RANGE OF DUTIES CRITICAL TO THE WORK OF THE KENTUCKY GENERAL ASSEMBLY."

- Jay Hartz
The Southern Legislative Conference extends special thanks to the Tennessee General Assembly and friends in the private sector for their assistance with the 75th Anniversary Annual Meeting. We are grateful for their continued support and interest in the conference over the years.

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Oklahoma

SENATE PRESIDENT
HARVEY S. PEELER, JR.
Chair Elect
South Carolina

SPEAKER
CAMERON SEXTON
Immediate Past Chair
Tennessee

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SENATOR TYLER HARPER
Vice Chair
Georgia

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Chair
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LINDSEY GRAY
Director
The Southern Legislative Conference is heading to Oklahoma City in 2022! Join us and the Oklahoma Legislature for the 76th Annual Meeting, convening **July 9 - 13, 2022.**

In OKC, there's history, arts, and fun for everyone. See you there!

**Contact**

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